



# Songs of the Mississippi River

**Mississippi National River and Recreation Area**  
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# Songs of the Mississippi River

## About our National River

The Mississippi River contains 10,000 years of human history and countless millennia of natural evolution and change. Along its 2,350 mile journey from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico can be found wooded islands, canyon-like walls and floodplain forest. Cutting through our country's midsection, the Mississippi River and its peoples are part of the American story.

So significant to the nation is the 72 miles of river between the cities of Dayton/Ramsey to Hastings, Minnesota, that Congress declared it a unit of the National Park System—the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Visitors can find here a rich natural, historical and cultural heritage, a wide range of scenic and recreational resources, and a vital river economy.

## About this Songbook

The Mississippi River may be the most musical river in the entire world. Drum songs, folk songs, blues, and jazz were all invented and reinvented along its banks. People paddled on the river, crossed over it, traveled and lived alongside it, and have felt the need to say something about the experience. Working people told stories and sang songs about what they saw on the river. Artists sketched, painted and photographed it. Musicians have been truly prolific not only in the sheer volume of works about the river, but by a need to create entirely new musical styles just so they could describe their feelings about themselves and the water.

There are many unique and interesting stories about the Mississippi River, some of which have inspired these songs. The guitar chords, the string and harmonica rhythms, and the lyrics floating along on top seem to imitate how the river runs. These songs reflect the eight educational themes presented by the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area and are proving to be a fine way to talk about the "Great Mississippi." The themes are listed on the contents page in bold followed by the titles of the songs that relate to them.

As you play these songs, ask yourself what the Mississippi River means to you. Even more importantly, come down to the river, rediscover its majesty, and consider taking an active role in caring for its future.

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“ROLL RIVER JOURNEY”

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“PIERRE BOTTINEAU”

“REVEREND HICKMAN'S HANDS”

“LIGHT THE RIVER”

**3. We must care for the Mississippi River.**

“TAKE A LOOK”

**4. Glacial and human forces shaped the river.**

“OLD RIVER”

**5. As a working river, the Mississippi River's influence extends far from its shoreline.**

“PILOT DADDY”

“FALLING WATERS”

**6. The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) corridor includes a variety of organisms and ecosystems; improved biological diversity is a goal.**

“FISHING RIVER”

**7. All living things (including humans) in the MNRRA corridor are interdependent.**

“PASS THE BOWL”

“RISING TIDE”

**8. The resources of the MNRRA corridor are nationally significant. The area is a unit of  
the National Park System.**

“RIVERTOWN”

“NATIONAL RIVER”

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*These songs were written by Charlie Maguire*



# GREAT MISSISSIPPI

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

The musical score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a C major chord and the lyrics 'Born eve - ry day at I - tas - ca'. The second staff continues with 'o - ver Saint An - thon - y Falls. She rolls through the'. The third staff continues with 'heart of this coun - try. She rolls through the hearts of us all.' The fourth staff is the start of the 'REFRAIN' with the lyrics 'She's the Great Mis - sis - sip - pi. She's a wind - ing'. The fifth staff continues with 'road. Eve - ry turn, eve - ry bend will bring you back a -'. The sixth staff concludes with 'gain For a sto - ry told.' Chords are indicated above the notes: C, Am, F, G, C, F, G, Am, D, G, F, G, Am, C, G, Am, F7, G, C, Am, F, G.

C Born eve - ry day at I - tas - ca

F o - ver Saint An - thon - y Falls. She rolls through the

G Am D G heart of this coun - try. She rolls through the hearts of us all.

REFRAIN F G C G Am F G She's the Great Mis - sis - sip - pi. She's a wind - ing

C G Am F G C G road. Eve - ry turn, eve - ry bend will bring you back a -

Am F7 G C Am F G gain For a sto - ry told.

## Additional Verses

She is a wide-shouldered river  
Taking the Rockies' high mountain snow  
And the soft spring rains of Virginia  
Along with her as she goes.

Rolling over Saint Peter Sandstone  
Twisting down Glenwood Shale  
Bearing down on Platteville Limestone  
For 12,000 years she's been there.

She's the "Rio Escondido,"  
The "Sassagoula," the "Mee-zee-see-bee."  
She has a river of names from her people,  
Twenty-four hundred miles to the sea.



# ROLL RIVER JOURNEY

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

## CHORUS

(bass line)  
G (F# E) D G C G

Roll, ri - ver jour - ney! \_\_\_\_\_ Roll, ri - ver jour - ney, roll! \_\_\_\_\_

Bmaj Em (bass line)  
(E D) C D

Roll, ri - ver jour - ney! \_\_\_\_\_ Take me where you're bound to

## VERSES

G C G

go! Call - ing \_\_\_\_\_ you on a jour - ney! \_\_\_\_\_  
Come on \_\_\_\_\_ down to the ri - ver! \_\_\_\_\_  
She'll make \_\_\_\_\_ you a be - liev - er! \_\_\_\_\_

C G Bmaj

Ramb - ling ri - ver Mis - sis - sip - pi! \_\_\_\_\_ Her sad, sweet, sing - ing sound - ing  
Hur - ry bro - thers and \_\_\_\_\_ sis - ters! \_\_\_\_\_ Her long, lost lov - ing ling - ers  
We be - long \_\_\_\_\_ to the ri - ver! \_\_\_\_\_ Her wan - der - ing wa - ter wait - ing

(bass line)  
Em (E D) C D G

through the air! \_\_\_\_\_ Roll, ri - ver jour - ney, \_\_\_\_\_ roll!  
ev - 'ry where! \_\_\_\_\_  
just down there! \_\_\_\_\_

## TAG

Bmaj Em

Her wan - der - ing wa - ter wait - ing just down there! \_\_\_\_\_ Her

Bmaj Em Bmaj

long lost lov - ing ling - ers ev - 'ry - where! \_\_\_\_\_ Her sad, sweet sing - ing sound - ing

(bass line)  
Em (E D) C D G

through the air! \_\_\_\_\_ Roll, ri - ver jour - ney \_\_\_\_\_ roll!

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# FIRST NATIONS

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

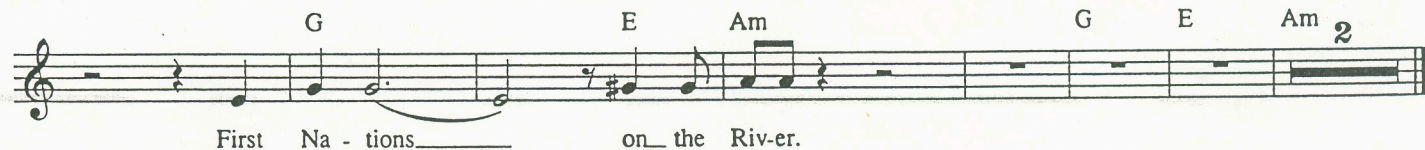
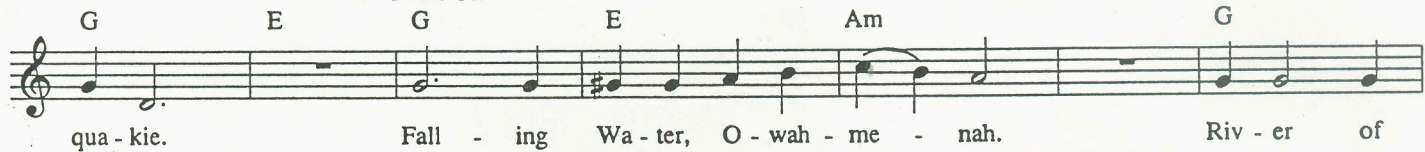
## REFRAIN



## VERSE



## BRIDGE



## Additional Verses

2. And they called it  
Mee-zee-see-bee, Chauqua,  
Tapata, Sassagoula.
3. And they lived at  
Hole in the Day, Kaposia,  
Remnicha, Wabasha.
4. Dakota, Mesquakie, Illinois, Miami,  
Anishinabe, Tionontati.



# PIERRE BOTTINEAU

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

## VERSE

A man of the old roads, the Riv-er and the Trail, He was hard as stone.

Clear Sky Wo-man's \_ Child. The Na-tions claimed him as their own, \_

La-ko-ta French, O-jib - we, he was at home, or else he was liv-ing \_ wild.

## REFRAIN

Sing it \_ high, sing it \_ low, Sing it where the Riv-er \_ goes for Pi-erre \_ Bot - ti - neu.

Chan - tez Oh \_ Pi - erre \_ Bot - ti - neu.

## BRIDGE

Tra - vel - ing like wood - smoke \_ Up and down the coun - try. \_

Fol-low-ing the drum song in his \_ heart \_ and the church bells of St. An - tho - ny. \_

## Additional Verses

2. A man of the old ways  
Of the buffalo coat  
And the Calumet  
Outside of cabin walls  
And in the fire-dancing night.  
He whispered to her the stories of his days  
In the language of the river falls.

3. A man of the old times  
Who could read the future  
And the buffalo sign  
With equal fluency,  
In this sainted land  
Named by Galtier and the native bands  
He held clearly to both memories.



# REVEREND HICKMAN'S HANDS

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

## VERSE 1

Rev - er - end Hick - man's hands were those \_ of a work - ing \_ man,  
Swing - ing a ham - mer and split - ting \_ rail \_ \_ by the light of day, \_ Rev - er - end Hick - man's hands  
were those \_ of a preach - ing man. \_ At night they built a boat to take the pil - grims a - way.

## CHORUS

Oh Pil - grim, Run to the riv - er! Run to the riv - er!  
Run to the riv - er! The riv - er in prayer, Oh Pil - grim, Run to the  
riv - er! Run to the riv - er! For Free - dom! \_ Free - dom! \_

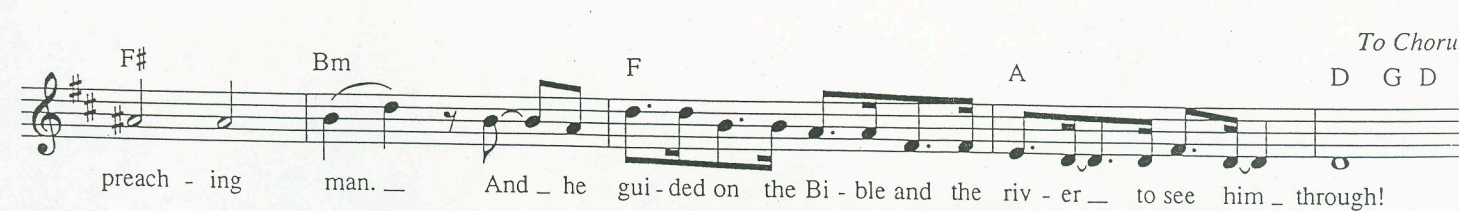
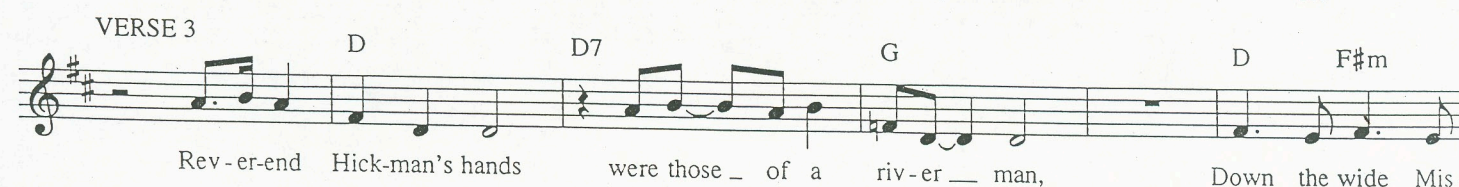
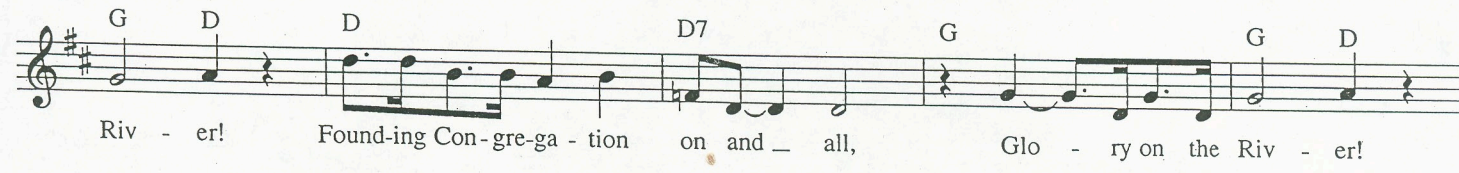
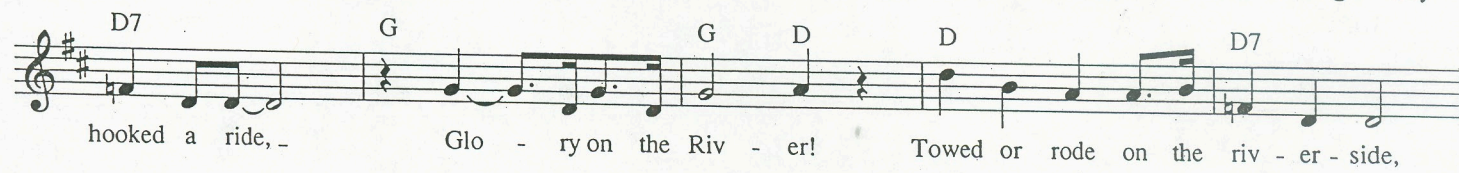
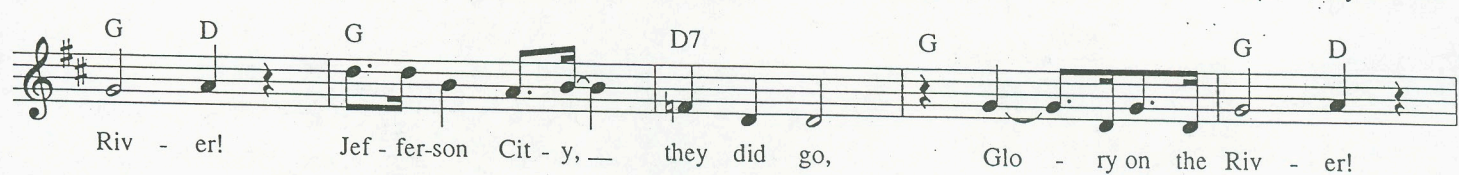
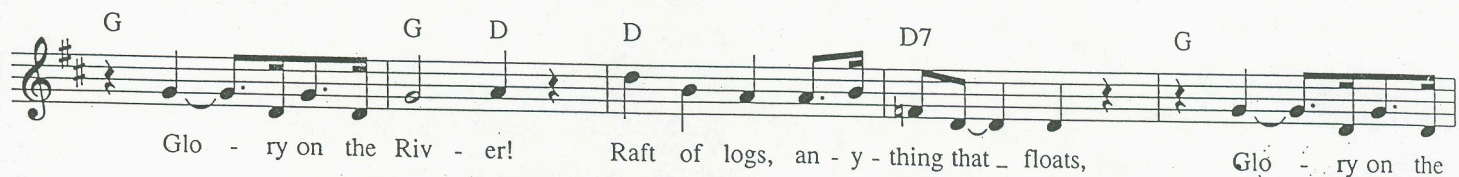
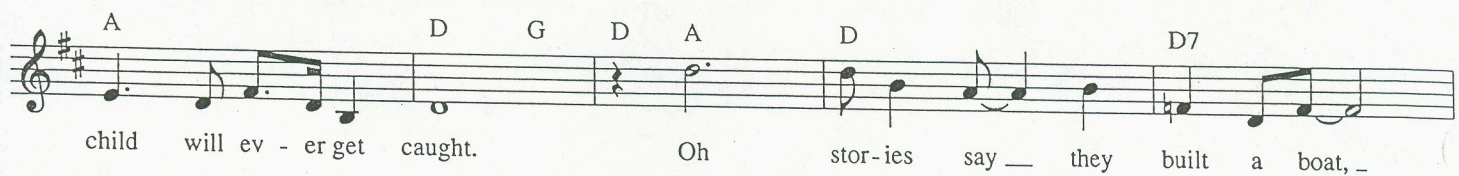
## VERSE 2

Free - dom \_ wait - ing there! Rev - er - end Hick - man's hands were those \_ of a fear - less man, \_  
\_ \_ When the cry went out they \_ \_ were long, long gone. Rev - er - end  
Hick - man's hands were those \_ of a preach - ing man. \_ \_ No man, no wo - man, no

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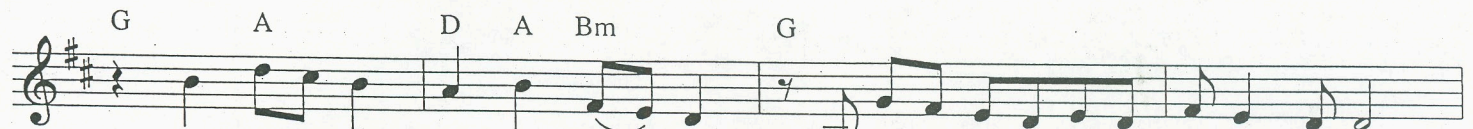
# LIGHT THE RIVER

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE



1. Row-ing on the wa - ter,  
2. (See additional verse)

Pull-ing on the oar. \_



Jane Ro-bin-son "post light keep - er"

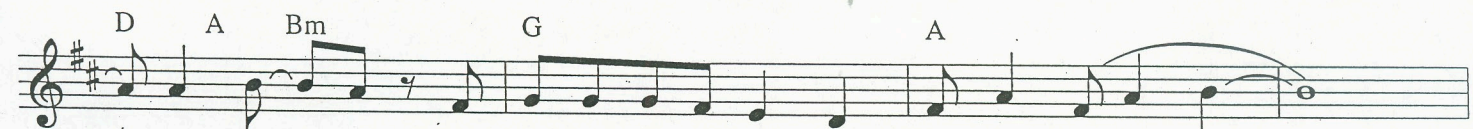
A-long the Mis-sis-sip-pi Ri-ver shore. \_



Row-ing on the wa - ter,

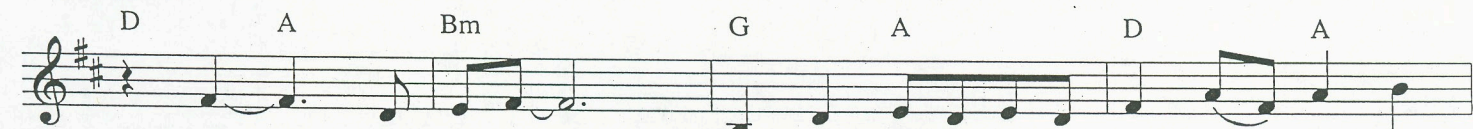
To shine a \_ light

On "Big Mud-dy" for all \_



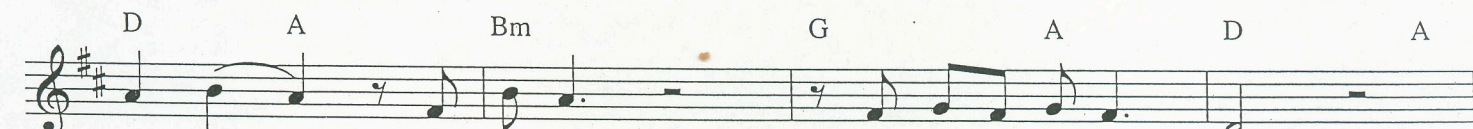
\_ who stu - dy His tar-nished sil - ver high - way through the night. \_

## REFRAIN



Light \_ the riv - er, \_

show your light un - til the break of \_ day, Now



Jane, light \_ the ri - ver,

Then we'll be on our way.



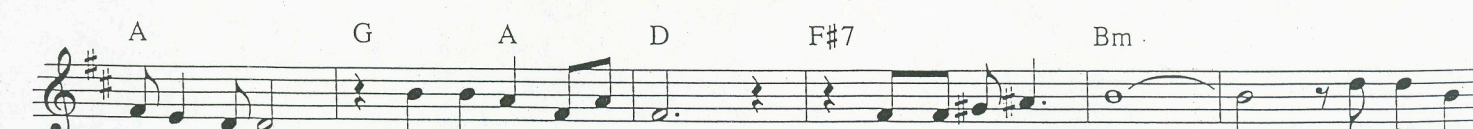
3. Row-ing on the wa - ter.

Pull-ing on the oar. \_



\_ "Old Man Ri-ver" is sneak - ing off

To join the sha-dows



on the shore. \_ Row-ing on the wa - ter.

Light the ri - ver, Jane \_

Be-fore the

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fire-flies shine \_ in the e-ven-ing time \_ Be-fore the sun goes down \_ and leaves us blind, \_ Be-fore the  
stars come out \_ in - to the sky, \_ This is what the pi-lots say. \_ Be-fore a  
snag-log catch-es our \_ poor \_ boats, Be-fore a sand-bar lifts us too high \_ to float, Be-fore the  
ri-ver grabs \_ us \_ by \_ the throat, \_ Light the ri-ver, Jane. \_

# REFRAIN

Light \_ the ri-ver Show you light un - til the break of \_ day, Now

Jane, light \_ the Ri-ver Then we'll be on our way \_

We'll be on our way \_ We'll be on our way \_

We'll be on our way \_

## Additional Verse

- Rowing on the water  
Spring-flood to fall  
Four lights showing whether clear or blowing  
From Dayton Bluff to South Saint Paul  
Rowing on the water  
River woman, Jane  
Bend your back in service to the brightest, purest  
Government specified clear, white, flame  
To Refrain



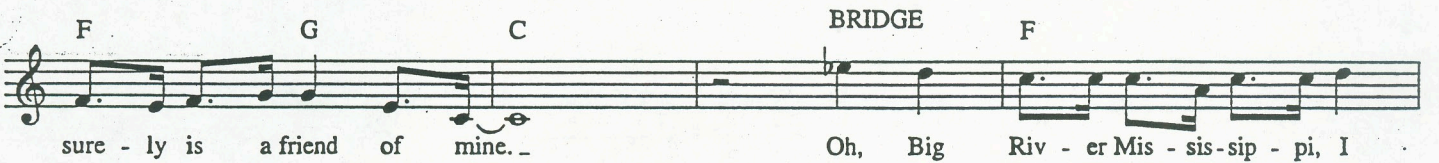
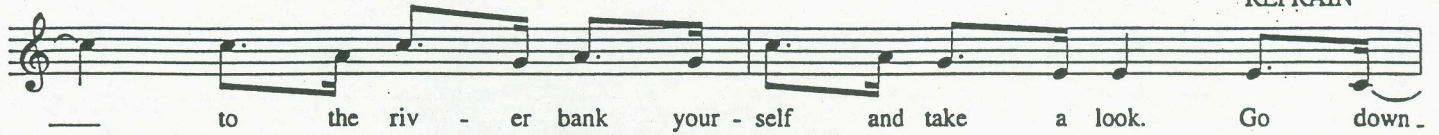
# TAKE A LOOK

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

## VERSE



## REFRAIN



## Additional Verses

2. Big River Mississippi is wide and fair,  
But behind a city, she gets lost down there.
3. If you can't see her, even driving slow  
Pull over and park, go down and say hello.
4. In 1988 the Congress did say  
"She's a national river, she ought to stay that way."



# OLD RIVER

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

F Bb A Dm Bb  
 You went \_ wher - ev - er \_ you want-ed \_ to go in a time of \_ your  
 C Bb F C  
 own. In a time of \_ your own. Wind \_ and wa - ter, \_  
 A Dm Bb C F REFRAIN  
 Earth \_ and sky \_ were \_ all \_ that you \_ lived by. Old \_  
 Bb9 F C7  
 Riv - er, be - fore \_ you had a name, You ran your own \_ way, \_ a  
 F Bb9 F  
 ram - bling. \_ Old \_ Riv - er, be - fore \_ you had a  
 A G7 C  
 name, You were the name \_ for trav - el - ing.

⊕ CODA (after last refrain)

Bbm7 C F  
 You were \_ the name \_ for leav - ing. \_

## Additional Verses

2. You were whatever you wanted to be  
 In a time of your own.  
 In a time of your own.  
 Winter, Summer, Spring, and Fall  
 Never really changed you at all.

Old River, before you had a name,  
 You rambled through the seasons.  
 Old River, before you had a name,  
 You were the name for leaving.

3. You went wherever you wanted to go  
 In a time of your own.  
 In a time of your own.  
 Shallow and wide, narrow and deep  
 On your own way to the sea.

Old River, before you had a name,  
 You rambled through the seasons.  
 Old River, before you had a name,  
 You were the name for leaving.



# PILOT DADDY

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

## VERSE

G F C G

There's a tow com - ing up - bound keep - ing to the red, Tak - ing all — nine feet.

F C G F C G

Your Pi - lot Dad - dy gon - na get you out of bed, Sit - ting in the high seat.

F C G F C G

Read - y with your steel toes, Lace them in the dark, One hand for the boat now.

F C G F C G

Your Pi - lot Dad - dy, he was born to bark, This ain't no Ro - me-o,

## REFRAIN

F C D Em F C F C

And you're all go - ing out to show Just how much a line deck - ie don't know, Swap

G F C G F C

Now! Trade up the rig - ging, Your Pi - lot Dad - dy's on the ra - di - o. Swap

G F C G F C G F C

Now! You can hear him sing-ing, "One, Two, Three, Four, Puz - zle out that tow." —

## Additional Verses

2. A barge ain't nothing but a hole in the water  
For moving the Midwest.  
Your Pilot Daddy has no papers on one,  
So he's talking to the office.  
When he bumps,  
You move as quick as you can.  
One hand for the boat now,  
Your Pilot Daddy he is going to keep you safe,  
He's got the know-how.

3. Two boxes on the stern,  
Three rakes on the head,  
Notch on the portside.  
Your Pilot Daddy is making his bread,  
Watching how it all rides.  
There's a tow coming upbound,  
Keeping to the red,  
Taking all nine feet.  
Your Pilot Daddy is going to get you out of bed,  
Sitting in the high seat.



# FALLING WATERS

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

Very Slow and Free Flowing  
VERSE

Mis-sis-sip-pi she's a chang-ing riv-er. Don't let her  
ea-sy go-ing fool you. Cit-ies have ris-en where she's gone,  
and she don't stay in one place for ver-y long.

REFRAIN

At her fall-ing wa-ters. You know, she's a might-y  
riv-er. At her fall-ing wa-ters.

BRIDGE

Call her O-wah-me-nah, Call her St. An-tho-ny. Mis-sis-sip-pi  
she's a liv-ing riv-er. Fall-ing wa-ters, O-wah-me-nah.  
Once you've heard her fif-teen miles a-way.  
Sev-en-ty-five feet high, miles and miles from where she is to-day.

Additional Verses

2. Mississippi, she's a working river.  
Don't let her graceful beauty fool you.  
She's milled timber for a million houses, roof and walls,  
Milled a million wheatfields, for bread on the table  
for them all.

3. Mississippi, there are legends in the river.  
Don't let her peaceful manner fool you.  
She's been in every kind of story that's ever been told  
Light and dark, new and old.



# FISHING RIVER

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

## REFRAIN

G B Em Em7



M - I - dou - ble S - I dou - ble S - I - P - P - I

C#7 D13 G D7



That's \_\_\_\_ a good fish - in' riv - er to try.

G B Em Em7



M - I - dou - ble S - I dou - ble S - I - P - P - I

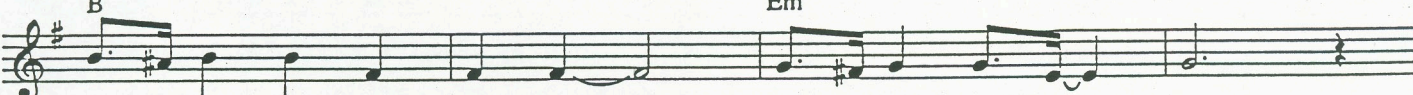
C#7 D13 G D13 G



That's \_\_\_\_ a good fish - in' riv - er to try.

## VERSE

B Em



Pad - dle fish, Rock Bass, Bow - fin, \_\_\_\_ Chan - nel Cat, Short - Nose \_ Gar,

C#7 D13



Small - mouth Bass, Shov - el Nose Stur - geon, They aren't ver - y \_\_\_\_ far.

## Additional Verses

I'm going to take my time  
With my hook and line,  
Trying to put on a show.  
And if we get nothing,  
We're sure to catch something,  
Watching the River flow.

Quillback, Shorthead Redhorse,  
Bigmouth Buffalo,  
Mooneye, Walleye, Freshwater Drum,  
Don't you want to go?



# PASS THE BOWL

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

## A CAPELLA REFRAIN



Pass the bowl, \_ oh \_ Pass the bowl. \_



Oh \_ Riv - er. Pass the bowl. \_

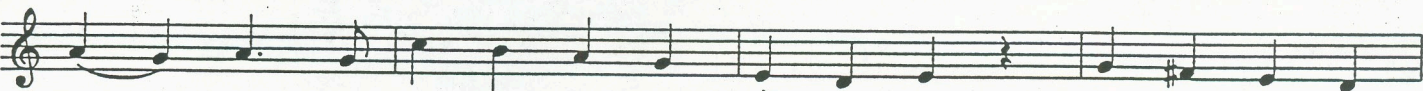
## VERSE



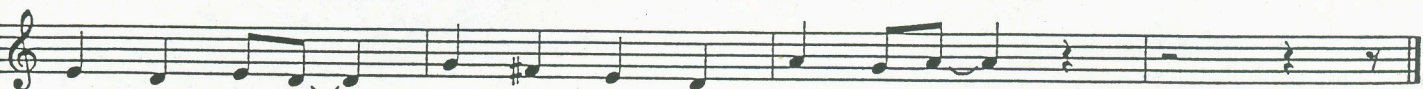
The wild \_ rice tall and slen - der Grow - ing in qui - et wa - ter.



The ca - noe will bring it clo - ser, Pass the bowl. \_



The \_ rice is like a trea - sure, a \_ gift from the riv - er,



Ripe and rea - dy \_ for the Knock - er, Pass the bowl. \_

## Additional Verses

Out in the fields  
The wheat has risen,  
Planted by machines in rhythm  
To the weather and the season,  
Pass the bowl.  
This grain is like treasure.  
Take it down upon the river,  
Around the world to the cook and the baker.  
Pass the bowl.



# RISING TIDE

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

## VERSE 1

F C G Am F C G Am

Hard win-ter, — fro-zen ground. — No place for Spring to go, down. —

F C G Am F C G C

No-where to go, no-where to hide. When the riv-er wants to ram-ble on the ris-ing tide.

## CHORUS

F C G Am F C G Am

Ris-ing tide, on the high wa-ter, Ris-ing tide, on the riv-er - side. —

F C G Am F C G

Ris-ing tide, on the high wa-ter. Get your-self down to the riv-er — wide. —

### 1. End of 1st Chorus

Am F C G

There's high wa-ter com-ing on the Ris-ing

### 2. End of 2nd Chorus

C C F C C C F C F C

Tide. — high wa-ter com-ing on the

G Am F C G C C F C

Ris-ing Tide, There's high wa-ter com-ing on the Ris-ing Tide. —

### To Bridge

### 3. End of 3rd Chorus

C C F C F C G Am F C

high wa-ter com-ing on the Ris-ing Tide, There's high wa-ter com-ing on the

G Am F C G Am

ris-ing tide, There's high wa-ter com-ing on the ris-ing tide, There's

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F C G C C F C C C F C

high wa - ter com - ing on the Ris - ing Tide.

VERSE 2

F C G Am F C G Am

Miles \_ an hour, \_ roll - ing in flood Mak - ing miles \_ a day o - ver mus - cle and blood,

F C G Am F C G C

Tears \_ and Sweat can on - ly pro - vide High - er wa - ter for the ris - ing tide.

To Chorus, take 2nd ending

BRIDGE

Am G

You can't \_ stop her, no, \_ no! \_ Ris - ing up, on her own, \_

F Am

Run - ning hard, bound to go \_ On the Ris - ing Tide. \_

Am G

And you don't know her \_ an - y - more, \_ Some - thing you've nev - er seen \_ be - fore. \_

F E

Deep and \_ wide, \_ on the Ris - ing Tide \_ On the

Am G F

Ris - ing Tide! \_ On the ris - ing \_ tide \_

VERSE 3

Am F

Riv - er,

C G Am F C G Am

riv - er, chang - ing plans, \_ Ris - ing to re - claim your lands. \_

To Chorus, take 3rd ending

F D G Am F C G C

Tak - ing his - to - ry for a ride On the high wa - ter and the Ris - ing Tide.



# RIVERTOWN

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

C  
Come on — down, — down to the riv - er with the wa - ter shined up for to - day. —

F  
Flow - ing all night, got me feel - ing all right, Like a beat - ing heart roll - ing the hours a - way. Now we're

E7 F  
rea - dy to go — to cel - e - brate this show to fin'l - ly see what's al - ways been a - round. —

C G F  
— Re - mind - ing me and you what has al - ways been true, That we're liv - ing in a Riv - er -

REFRAIN  
C E7 F C E7  
town. Oh, oh, liv - ing in a Riv - er - town. Oh,

F C G C  
oh, liv - ing in a Riv - er - town. — No more to turn my back, — going to

E7 F D7  
fol - low that track, To the Riv - er, I'm a - go - ing — down, To

C G  
spread the word that is bound to be heard, that we're liv - ing in a Riv - er - town.

## Additional Verses

Going to jump down, turn around  
Listen to the river sound  
Where it all began,  
A highway, byway, up above a flyway  
Long before anything was built by hand.  
Now we're ready to go, to celebrate this show  
To finally see what's always been around,  
Reminding me and you what has always been true,  
Living in a Rivertown.

# NATIONAL RIVER

Words and Music by  
CHARLIE MAGUIRE

## VERSE

C F G C

"Great Mis - sis - sip - pi" In the "U. S. A." "Old Man

F G C F

Riv - er" Roll - in' a - way. If ev - 'ry-bo - dy here \_

C (bass line B) Am F G

Will lend a \_ hand, We'll bring this "Na - tion - al \_ Riv - er" \_ back a -

## REFRAIN

C G

gain. Takes a lot of hands to care for the

C G

Riv - er. \_ Takes \_ a lot of voic - es to pro-tect her

C Am F

name. Takes \_ a lot of heart To love \_ a riv - er, \_

C G C

To bring this "Na - tion - al \_ Riv - er" \_ back a - gain. \_

## Additional Verses

Mississippi River  
"Red, White, and Blue"  
Eagles are flying  
Over the water too  
If everybody here  
Will take a stand  
We'll bring this "National River" back again...

Mississippi River  
Front end to end  
"National River"  
"All American"  
If everybody here  
Will make it their friend  
We'll bring this "National River" back again...